The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

OTHER MATTERS (agenda item 11) (continued)

Proposal concerning the location of UNDP and UNFPA headquarters (continued)

1. Mr. JASINSKI (Poland) said that Germany, in proposing that the headquarters of UNDP and UNFPA should move to Bonn, showed the importance it attached to multilateral cooperation and its principal bodies. The offer was a generous one and should enable UNDP to economize, in particular in the administrative sphere. Poland found the offer all the more interesting since it itself had already come out in favour of setting up a regional office of UNDP in Central Europe. Before taking a decision, however, the Governing Council must consider all the implications of such a transfer. Without prejudice to its final decision, the Polish Government welcomed the proposal and would await the results of the study to be conducted on the question.

2. Mr. EL GHAOUTH (Mauritania) supported Germany's offer. However, he would like to make sure that the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office, which did not appear among the UNDP bodies that the German authorities were proposing to host, would be included.

3. Ms. DUDIK GAYOSO (United States of America) said that Germany's proposal indicated its desire to become more actively involved in cooperation for development. It was difficult, however, to reconcile such a proposal with a United Nations system that was unified and attempted to avoid duplication of work. Dispersion of the system's bodies involved a heavy cost. In view of the need further to integrate the entire United Nations system and to foster coordination of operational activities, her delegation had some serious reservations regarding the German delegation's offer, and would find it very difficult to join a consensus on the issue.

4. Mrs. FEROUKHI (Algeria) endorsed the German proposal, which at the current stage consisted simply of studying all the aspects of a possible move to Bonn, including its financial implications, in particular for UNDP regional programmes.

5. Mr. KOIKE (Japan) noted with satisfaction a proposal that reflected a desire to serve the cause of multilateral cooperation. However, he was not convinced that it would be appropriate to lengthen the list of headquarters cities of principal United Nations organs, which were already spread among New York, Geneva and Vienna. In addition, moving UNDP and UNFPA to Bonn would require member countries to have missions in Bonn, while their embassies would be in Berlin. Japan could not take a decision as long as all those questions had not been thoroughly examined.

6. Mr. SHEIKH (Pakistan) shared the view of the representative of Japan. There were certainly arguments in favour of a move to Bonn, for many major donors were located in Europe, and many countries receiving UNDP aid were quite close to that region. However, all aspects and implications of the offer should be carefully studied, as indeed the German delegation itself was suggesting.

7. Mr. TRAXL (Austria) agreed that the Council did not have to reach an immediate decision on the merits of the question. Careful thought should first be given to the offer, and his delegation joined those who would like to see an exhaustive study on the question.

8. Mr. MOULA (Yemen) said that UNDP and UNFPA played a crucial role on behalf of developing countries in general and the least developed countries in particular. Thus any decisions concerning the future of those programmes must be based on criteria of efficiency. Considering the question from that perspective, his delegation endorsed the proposal to move to Bonn, for that would bring UNDP closer to recipient countries located in Asia and Africa.

9. Mr. DORANI (Djibouti) noted that the proposed move would raise huge problems for small countries like his own, many of which did not have a mission in Bonn whereas they did have one in New York, and would therefore lose the opportunity they currently had to be in contact with UNDP headquarters.

10. Mr. BELL (India) said that the Indian Government was currently giving very serious consideration to the German proposal, which was extremely generous but raised many practical problems regarding cooperation and representation, as several delegations had already remarked. His delegation could not yet take a decision either way.

11. Mr. KURTH (Germany) noted that most of the delegations that had spoken had requested a careful study to be made of the German offer, thus confirming that Germany had been right to submit its proposal. He would not fail to inform the German authorities of the uncertainties and concerns of many delegations and of some opposition based on principle. His delegation was perfectly aware that its proposal would have many repercussions, which should be carefully measured, and it trusted the President to find the proper formula for helping the Council to embark on a study that would be satisfactory to all. He would like to make it clear that his delegation was seeking no advantage for Germany and had only UNDP's long-term interests in mind.

12. The PRESIDENT said that it would be premature to express a final opinion on Germany's offer at the present time. Most delegations seemed to agree that it should be the subject of a more thorough study by the secretariat and the Council itself. He suggested that the Council should authorize him to hold consultations on how to wind up the discussion on the issue.

13. It was so decided.

SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ASSISTANCE (agenda item 4) (continued)

(d) ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (DP/1992/18)

14. Mr. ROTHERMEL (Director, Division for Global and Interregional Programmes) introduced the report of the Administrator on assistance to the Palestinian people (DP/1992/18). Encouraging progress had been made in project deliveries in recent months, following the temporary slow-down caused by the Gulf war. The progress was essentially due to the staff of the UNDP Office in Jerusalem and the thousands of counterpart Palestinian personnel.

While allocations from the Special Programme Resources (SPR) formed the indispensable underpinning for the Programme, it received considerable additional support bilaterally, under funds-in-trust or management service agreements. Such resources made it possible to implement an array of projects.

15. UNDP had extended its project identification and assessment efforts in the occupied Palestinian territories and was seeking to set up information exchange mechanisms and coordination with other United Nations agencies and multilateral and bilateral donors. The UNDP Office in Jerusalem had also led in a multi-donor effort to provide relief to Palestinian farmers whose farms had been damaged during the previous winter's snows. The Office had also begun to produce a series of reports on various development issues, the first of which had been an overview of environmental issues in the occupied territories; in addition, it published a quarterly newsletter in Arabic and English, designed to increase awareness of UNDP's work in the area among the Palestinian community and aid donors.

16. Mr. Robert van Schaik, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations, would be undertaking in the latter part of 1992 a broad review of the Programme's role and modus operandi, in order to improve the work of a leading provider of development assistance for the benefit of the Palestinian inhabitants of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Mr. van Schaik was expected to make his conclusions available to the Administrator by the end of 1992.

17. Mr. DOSS (Observer for Egypt) noted with satisfaction that the basic resources of the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People had risen from $3.5 million for the second programming cycle (1980-1991) to $15 million for the fifth cycle (1992-1996). He was pleased to note that bilateral voluntary contributions to the Programme had risen accordingly and that the priorities set were in keeping with the needs of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. However, work in the field had been completely suspended during the Gulf war, and he hoped that such an incident would not recur.

18. Mr. YAO Wenlong (China) noted that the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People had been in existence for 12 years and that it had contributed over $25 million to the development of the occupied territories. That figure, to which significant bilateral subsidies should be added, had made it possible to implement many projects, in particular to create jobs and improve the standard of living in general. The fifth programming cycle should see the intensification of a type of operation which China unreservedly supported. His delegation hoped that UNDP would continue that programme of direct aid, which was well suited to the population's needs.

19. Mr. MORALES (Cuba) expressed satisfaction at the expansion of the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, for it had numerous positive effects in the social sphere. UNDP was doing excellent work, and his delegation supported the new activities being planned.

20. Mr. EL-MUNTANER (Observer for the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) endorsed the initiatives taken by UNDP to assist the Palestinian people and urged the international community to help it to exercise all its rights, including the right of return.

21. Mr. TANTOT (France) noted with satisfaction the resumption of the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People and the effort at dialogue and transparency made by UNDP in that regard. The meetings for exchange of information and coordination with the bilateral donors were extremely useful, if only for avoiding duplication of work. UNDP had a very positive role to play from that point of view. His delegation welcomed the good relations that had been developed between the UNDP team in Jerusalem and the representatives of French technical assistance. They might conceivably conduct joint operations, in the agricultural sphere in particular, which could only be beneficial.

22. Mrs. FEROUKHI (Algeria) welcomed the increase in allocations for the fifth cycle of the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, which she saw as an indication of the international community's growing interest in the fate of the Palestinian people. The Programme of Assistance focused on many vital aspects of the economic and social life of the Palestinian people, and it would therefore be appropriate to extend to it the concept of sustainable development encountered in all other UNDP programmes. It was important to remember that the Palestinian people was living under occupation and that it must be able to recover the rights it had been denied and to develop in dignity.

23. Mr. SALLOUM (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) reaffirmed the need to continue assistance to the Palestinian people in order to improve its living conditions until it could decide its fate freely and establish an independent State.

24. Mr. SHOJI (Japan) said that his Government, which was concerned about the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, had consistently pursued a policy of providing the Palestinian people with humanitarian assistance for creating an environment conducive to peace and stability in the region. Thanks to its political neutrality, UNDP had a comparative advantage for that type of assistance, and for that reason, since 1988 Japan had made available to the Programme approximately $2 million annually (in 1992: $2.5 million) through a trust fund. His delegation welcomed the recent steps taken by UNDP's field offices to improve coordination with the bilateral donors.

25. Mr. DORANI (Djibouti) said that at the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, a resolution had been adopted calling upon Israel immediately to lift restrictions on and obstacles to the implementation of assistance projects undertaken by UNDP and other United Nations bodies for the benefit of the Palestinian people. His delegation asked whether UNDP had encountered any such obstacles and, if so, whether it had been able to overcome them.

26. Mr. MOULA (Yemen) welcomed the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People and expressed appreciation to all those countries that had provided the Programme with complementary resources.

27. Mr. ROTHERMEL (Director, Division for Global and Interregional Programmes) thanked all those who had spoken on the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, in particular the delegations of China and Algeria, which had pointed out that the aid provided was tailored to needs and had spoken of the applicability of the concept of sustainable development. Concerning the information meetings referred to by the French delegation, credit was due above all to the Special Representative of the Administrator in Jerusalem. As to the question of obstacles raised by the representative of Djibouti, difficulties had, in fact, arisen from time to time, but generally speaking, the Programme was proceeding satisfactorily. In conclusion, he said that a contribution of $7.4 million pledged or already paid by Italy was to be added to the complementary resources referred to in document DP/1992/18.

28. The PRESIDENT announced that the general debate on agenda item 4, sub-item (d) had been concluded, and he suggested that the Drafting Group should begin preparing a draft decision on the question.

29. It was so decided.

(c) IMPACT OF THE GULF CRISIS

30. Mr. ATTIGA (Assistant Administrator and Regional Director of the Bureau for Arab States and Europe) recalled that at its February session, the Governing Council had recommended putting an end to the functions of the UNDP Gulf Task Force and extending assistance bilaterally as well as through the relevant UNDP units or other international bodies concerned. Since then, the Resident Representatives had continued to assist countries wherever the direct impact of the Gulf crisis was still felt, for example Mauritania, the assistance to that country focusing on aid coordination, planning and other forms of support.

31. The return of migrant workers to their home countries from Iraq and Kuwait (more than 3.5 million persons) had created great difficulties for Arab countries such as Jordan, Yemen and the Sudan as well as, in Asia, for Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam. UNDP and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) had convened a seminar in Cairo to review and improve the capacity of Arab countries to monitor labour movements and to handle migration flows. The seminar had also been attended by the representatives of the hardest-hit Asian countries.

32. UNDP also sought to extend assistance on a regional basis in connection with the impact of the crisis on the environment. The Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME), which included the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, as well as Iraq and Iran, had taken the lead with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in seeking support for the Consolidated Rehabilitation Programme on the environment. UNDP was currently engaged in discussions with UNEP and the Regional Organization on supporting one component of the Consolidated Programme to assist in enhancing environment emergency management response systems.

33. Lastly, the UNDP office in Iraq had been able to make available $600,000 in humanitarian assistance previously allocated from Special Programme Resources. Assistance had also been provided in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to contain the rinderpest disease outbreak in northern Iraq, which also affected cattle in Turkey, Iran, Syria and Jordan.

34. Mr. AL-OTHMAN (Kuwait) recalled that between 1962 and 1991, his country had made available on an annual average 7.5 per cent of its national income for aid to developing countries, not counting the funds it had given to regional development bodies and the assistance loans it had provided. Since the end of the Iraqi occupation Kuwait had been working to rebuild its economy so that it could resume its multilateral cooperation role. It had embarked upon a $1.5 billion emergency plan to rebuild hospitals, schools and infrastructure and had also spent a similar sum to extinguish oil-well fires and to carry out mine-clearing operations throughout the territory. The international community was rightly indignant at Iraq's refusal to meet its commitments and to sell its oil while millions of its victims were waiting for compensation and millions of Iraqis were living under extremely difficult conditions because of the stubbornness of their current leaders.

35. His delegation hoped that the Council would not attach greater importance to the fate of those Kuwaitis or others who had left Kuwait after the invasion than to the fate of those who had heroically resisted within the country. The interests of all must be protected in the same way. For its part, the Kuwaiti Government had taken measures to ensure, without any discrimination, the return of bank accounts, the payment of sums due to all State and private enterprise employees and of salaries corresponding to the period of occupation, medical care, etc. The cost of those measures was not yet known, but it raised the problem of compensation. Iraq must not be allowed to have any derogations from the obligation of turning over 30 per cent of its oil earnings, which would ensure that the Compensation Commission had adequate resources.

36. The vast majority of foreigners living in Kuwait had left the country just before the invasion or during the occupation, either because they feared mistreatment at the hands of the invaders or because they expected to return to Kuwait one day. His Government did not discriminate on the basis of nationality, but its economic situation no longer allowed it to absorb as many foreigners as in the past. Legally, any holder of an employment contract could stay in Kuwait. At any rate, it was above all the Iraqi occupation that was responsible for having caused that human tragedy and done harm to the region's development.

37. Mr. FERREIRA MARQUES (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the 12 member States of the European Community, said that the reports of the Task Force gave a good overview of the projects, either under way or to be undertaken, as well as an inventory of the activities of the bilateral and multilateral donors in the region. The European Community reaffirmed its support for UNDP's proposals on that question and took the view that it was unnecessary to follow up the activities of the Task Force; some of the projects had been concluded, and others did not require additional supervision.

38. Mr. DORANI (Djibouti) asked whether it was true that, for want of financial and other means, UNDP's programme on the impact of the Gulf crisis was to be terminated.

39. Ms. DUDIK GAYOSO (United States of America) said that document DP/1992/5 clearly showed the variety of needs linked to the Programme and gave valuable information on the funds required to revive the development process in the countries affected by the Gulf crisis. Her delegation took the view that those activities must be integrated into UNDP's normal programming process and that, as decided by the Governing Council in February, there was no need to maintain a separate programme on the impact of the Gulf crisis. The financial needs were considerable, but UNDP must focus on those areas in which it had a comparative advantage, for example coordination of external aid.

40. Mr. ATTIGA (Assistant Administrator and Regional Director of the Bureau for Arab States and Europe) paid tribute to Kuwait, which had been the first country to use its oil earnings to help developing countries, starting more than 10 years before the rise in oil prices. He was pleased that Kuwait intended to pursue that course despite the tragedy it had endured. By creating the Gulf Task Force, the Governing Council had had in mind not only the general repercussions of the crisis, which were very considerable, but also the direct impact on those countries affected by the crisis, that had not been directly involved. His oral report had merely reflected what had transpired since the February session of the Governing Council. All other aspects of the impact of the crisis, in particular upon the population that had stayed in Kuwait during the occupation or upon the environment, had been studied, analysed and quantified in the Task Force's report to the Governing Council at the February session. With regard to the question raised by the delegation of Djibouti, he confirmed that the Task Force no longer existed as a special programme financed by special contributions for that purpose. Funds had been taken from SPRs to assist the countries affected in evaluating their needs, but no contribution had been set at the December 1991 meeting. Nevertheless, UNDP continued to be concerned about the considerable problems hat persisted. Certain activities had been integrated into the regular programmes, but the IPFs of many of the countries concerned were very low. At the multilateral level, a number of regional activities had been undertaken to help returnees, but the hope was that activities at the bilateral level would be able to resolve the problems.

41. The PRESIDENT announced that the general debate on agenda item 4, sub-item (c) had been completed, and suggested that the Governing Council should take note of the statement of the Assistant Administrator and of the ensuing discussion.

42. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.